Volume 2, Issue 49   Atari Online News, Etc.   December 8, 2000

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A-ONE #0249   12/08/00

~ Brit Police Orwellian? ~ Free ISPs Dwindling!   ~ JagFest Update!
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-* Atari Gets A New Home, Again *-

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                    -* Opera Offers First Free Web Browser *-
                  -*   Infogrames Acquires Hasbro Interactive!  *-



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->From the Editor's Keyboard                "Saying it like it is!"
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""



Well, we all knew that the writing was on the wall; we just didn't know all
of the details.  Now we do - Hasbro Interactive, which included everything
that they bought from Atari, has been (or will be) acquired by Infogrames.
I've seen all kinds of reaction to this announcement - ranging from apathy
to elation.  Personally, and I'm a daily Atari user, I don't think this
acquisition will do anything that will positively or negatively affect us as
Atari users.  I see the potential for some more of the retro-games coming
out with an Infogrames/Atari label on it, but little if anything else.

Really, did anyone really think that Hasbro was going to bring Atari back
from the ashes?  Well, yes, many did.  Didn't happen.  Hasbro bought Atari
for "a song" and made a few bucks.  Infogrames will likely do the same.
Otherwise, Atari just happened to come with the deal.  They'll probably make
their money because games.com was part of the deal.

So, here comes another footnote in the history of Atari.  Another footnote
which is taking us closer to the end of the book.  It was fun while it
lasted.

Until next time...



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->A-ONE Reviews!    -   Video Turtle!
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by Joe Mirando


We all know the feeling. You've just spent the whole day optimizing
your Mega. The new power supply, the RAM upgrade, the hard drive, and
even those spiffy little keyboard key switches make this a machine you
can be proud of... the machine you've always wanted.

Then, horror of horrors, you spy your SC1224 monitor perched atop your
computer. It's a fine monitor to be sure. It's served you faithfully
and well through all of the word processing, online sessions, graphics
demos, and games you've thrown at it. In its day, it was a marvel:  A
monitor without flicker or fuzziness. It still performs well enough
today... but what about tomorrow? Atari hasn't made a computer in
years and, needless to say, monitor manufacturers have long since
forgotten that Atari even made computers. Should something go wrong
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with your monitor, you could search around for a fix-it shop that would be willing to take a stab at it or, if you're electronically gifted, you could search around for replacement parts yourself. But for most of us the only choice is to search around on the UseNet or on eBay for a used monitor and hope that the seller hasn't abused the unit too much and that it's got more than a couple of months of life left.

The other consideration is the size of the screen. Twelve inches diagonal was quite a windfall back when most PC users were struggling along with nine inch screens, but today's computer users have grown to expect and demand larger and larger monitors.

Some of us have RF modulators on the motherboard, but RF isn't really an option for someone who wishes to do anything in a resolution above ST LOW. RF transmission on a television just doesn't allow for the clarity or definition that medium resolution requires. Anyone who has tried it knows that TVs are okay monitors for game-play, but something like word processing is all but impossible.

So what are we to do? If only there was a way to convert the video signal from the computer into something that could be used by a standard television without the loss of clarity that RF modulation brings with it. THAT would truly be a worthy addition to any ST-series computer.

Evidently, these thoughts have also occurred to the folks at Turtle Enterprises. Their solution, the Video Turtle, is a small device that connects (via an optional cable) to any ST/STE, Mega/Mega STE, or Falcon030 computer and converts the computer's RGB output into "S-Video". Many televisions today have S-Video connectors. It's becoming more and more popular as video options like Laser-disk and DVD provide higher video quality than standard RF modulated televisions can take advantage of. S-Video provides crisp, clear video without flicker and without the interference associated with RF modulators. If you've ever used a "split video" monitor on an 8-bit Atari, you've seen S-Video. S-Video simply replaces the once familiar "Chroma" and "Lumin" RCA connectors with a four pronged connector. It looks something like those silly "PS-2" connectors that keyboard and mouse manufacturers like to use these days.

Because S-Video is not hobbled by RF modulation, the original color, clarity, and resolution remain intact. A large S-Video television will give an even better display than a smaller one because, unlike an RF modulated signal, S-Video makes use of the more numerous scan lines that the larger television provides.

From my point of view, the best thing about the Video Turtle (aside from the huge display, quality, and availability of monitors, of course) is the ease of installation. There are no video cards or add-on boards that need to be installed inside the computer. There are no drivers to provide hours of torment while you try to find just the right configuration. You simply connect the computer to the Video Turtle and the Video Turtle to the S-Video television. Apart from powering the Video Turtle with the supplied 9 volt AC adaptor, that's it. You simply turn everything on and do what you normally do. Since the Video Turtle is externally powered, you don't even need to worry about over-taxing your computer's power supply.

Having had experience only with standard Atari monitors and RF modulated signals with my Atari computers, I was surprised at the

clarity and depth of color possible on a television. Graphics look as they should, and text is clear and surprisingly sharp. And because there are no drivers needed and no CPU overhead there is absolutely no slowdown in either the display or computer performance.

The Video Turtle unit is relatively small (3 3/4" wide, 2 5/16" deep, 1 7/16" high) and requires no special consideration other than proximity to an electrical outlet (about 5.5 feet).

The Video Turtle package includes the Video Turtle, its AC adaptor, an S-Video cable, and instruction manual. The manual is short (9 pages), but includes all of the information necessary for successful installation and use of the Video Turtle. It also includes information on troubleshooting and configuration for other RGB output devices. Jumper settings for interfacing the Video Turtle with Amiga computers is also included. Because the Video Turtle is not an Atari-only interface, the necessary RGB (monitor) cable is not included as part of the package. Cables can be purchased separately, or you can build your own if you are so inclined. I'd highly recommend purchasing an RGB cable at the same time you purchase the Video Turtle unit. Building these cables yourself can be a pain in the neck.

The Video Turtle unit itself has four connectors:

The RGB input connector.

A nine pin DIN female connector. This is where the computer is connected to the Video Turtle.

The AC adaptor connector.

This is where the AC adaptor is plugged into the Video Turtle.

S-Video Out.

This is where the S-Video cable gets plugged in. The other end of the cable goes to the S-Video input on the television.

Composite out.

This is an RCA type connector. There isn't much said about this connector in the documentation, but with easy access to an S-Video signal, there doesn't seem to be much need for a standard composite signal.

For those with an STE, MegaSTE, or Falcon030, an S-Video capable TV with stereo sound is an added bonus. Instead of having to connect the stereo output from the computer to a set of speakers or some sort of amplified sound system, they can be connected directly to the audio ports on the television.

For those computers without stereo output, the sound signal that is normally carried via the monitor cable can be "brought out" and connected to the television's audio input.

Reviewer's notes:

I'm quite impressed with this product. It's usually not easy to make a device (any device) that does what it needs to do and takes up so

little space. The design and performance are good indications that the producers understand not only the product, but the market as well. If you have a need for a large display on an ST or Falcon030, the Video Turtle is the way to go.

One thing must be clearly stated about this device: It does not add to the number of colors or resolutions that can be displayed. Think of it as your Atari monitor... ON STEROIDS!

Product Info:

Product Name: Video Turtle

Manufacturer: Turtle Enterprises

Authorized Distributor: Tex Comp Ltd.
                               1-800-846-3474 (orders only)
                               1-626-339-8924 (tech support)

Retail Price: $149.95

Available: Now

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                        PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                      compiled by Joe Mirando
                        jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, I know you don't need to be told this, but the holidays are quickly approaching. We're expecting our first real snow as I'm writing this. Now, if you're from Buffalo, that doesn't mean much to you. But here in Connecticut it's news.

I'm one of those odd ducks who actually likes cold weather. I couldn't tell you exactly why, but I normally tell people who look at me strangely when I say that I prefer the cold that it's because, if you're cold, you can always put another blanket on the bed. But if it's too hot, you're out of luck.

On another subject, I'm pleased to announce that the Team Atari SETI@home group has contributed almost 31.5 years of CPU time to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. If you have the urge to join in the search, visit http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu (main SETI@home page) or http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cgi?cmd=team_lookup&name=team+atari (Team Atari page). Even if it just tickles your imagination a bit, stop by and check it out.

The A-ONE website is coming along nicely, even though we'd like to see more people submitting news and other items of interest. Did you know that we've also got a links engine? You can submit your Atari-related

link to us and share it with everyone.

Well, let's get on with the news and STuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Øystein Trollsås asks for info on CD burners:

"Can one of you out there tell me how to install the CD burner to a
Falcon with SCSI. I've got one SCSI hard disk from before, so what should
be the first and last. I bought a TEAC CD-R55S and it was at the
"CDlab-list" and the CDburner list. I tried the CDlab, but I couldn't
open it after installing the burner with the Hard disk driver."

John Cummins tells Øystein:

"2 things to be aware of:

SCSI ID number
Termination

If your drive is working well now, then termination is probably OK, and
will stay that way if the existing items are kept in order at the end
of the chain and the CD-Burner is installed close to the host adapter.

Termination is a resistor load at the end of the chain that keeps
signals from bouncing off the end of the SCSI cable and "ringing" like
a bell... destroying the clean data signal. It is sometimes built into
a drive and enabled/disabled via jumpers or just removed if not
needed. Sometimes it's a separate item on the end of the SCSI cable.

The ID number of your CD-Burner should be unique on the chain. In PC
systems the Host is usually id 7 (highest priority) with 6 down to 0
following in priority. This is usually set with 3 jumpers on the device
(no jumpers = 0, all jumpers =7, etc.) and if two devices have the
same ID, you need to change one. You'd be safe with the HD as id 2
and the burner as id 1 if you don't plan on adding any other items.

HD as id 6 and CD-ROM as ID 5 would probably be best."

Artur Stachon asks about Falcon Accelerators:

"I was looking at some of the Atari Falcon accelerators and they are more
expensive than the computer itself. Weird stuff. At least if that was
300-600mhz increase maybe it would be worth buying but 30-40mhz speed
increase won't even speed your computer up 100% Are there any
reasonably-priced atari falcon accelerators out there? Used ?"

Jo Even Skarstein tells Artur:

"An Afterburner at 32MHz is ~8 times faster than a stock Falcon, @40MHz
it's 10 times faster (average figures). If you're lucky you might find
second-hand Afterburners, but expect to pay at least $200-300 for it."

Artur tells Jo Even:

"Today for $300 you can buy Athlon 1Ghz CPU (way faster than G4) +

motherboard (on auction) plus you can overclock it to 1.2 Ghz or more. Weird isn't it ?

I think that Atari TOS is an exceptional OS not like those mammoth Mac or Pc OS."

William Wong asks:

"I guess all the amount are in US$.

Over here, I see an classified ad for a complete K6-2 system for about US$300, with HDD, CDROM & sound card. The K6-2 is 400MHz which equates to a P2 class CPU. Run a good ST emulator on it and you have a fast Atari emulator.

One thing, the feel is not the same as an real Atari. The mouse feels smoother and smaller than that squarish Atari mouse and the also click are softer on the PC mouse. The PC keyboard are the worst, there is no HELP key on it."

Dolan Morrison asks about transporting files from PC to STE:

"How do I copy files from a PC to my Atari STE. The PC does not recognize the ste floppy and vice versa."

Steve Stupple tells Dolan:

"The Atari ST uses a DOUBLE DENSITY disks (720k) not a 360k one!!! Modern PCs use HIGH DENSITY disks (1.44).

The disks are different, HD have 1 write protect hole and a hole you can't close, they usually have 'HD' on them. The media, the stuff that your valuable data is written too, is different as well.

Some Atari's will cough and splutter reading a HD disk formatted as a 720k one!

NONE of my DD Atari floppies will read one (hd one that is)! I do have a very generous external drive that WILL read them.

All it takes is 1 bit, in the bit stream and your data is gone. What's more you may not be aware of the corruption, the file may read ok, but it only takes 1 eighth of a byte!!! 1 fraction of a fraction of a nano second wile reading and you've lost that valuable data!"

One of the greats from Atari days gone by, Bob Retelle, tells Dolan:

"Format the disk on the PC, but at the top of the Format dialog box, select "720K" instead of the default 1.44Meg setting.

The Atari uses a low density disk drive that can't read standard PC disks, but by formatting it as a 720K disk, both systems should be able to read it."

Hallvard Tangaraas posts this about Atari and Mac disks:

"Here's a strange problem which I can't seem to figure out:

I format a (DD) disk on my Mac (choosing the MSDOS format) or my STe with "Hcopy" (as it formats MSDOS properly, unlike many other

formatters), but they only work with the machine they're formatted on!

I.e. if I put the previously Macintosh formatted (MSDOS) disk in my STe
I get a "defective bootsector" error when I try to read the directory
using "Hcopy".

Then I reformat it using Hcopy to the usual DD standards.

I put the disk in the Mac, and nothing happens for a loooong time.
Then I'm asked if I want to format the disk.

I do this, choosing MSDOS again, and the disk works fine (I believe
-this is getting pretty confusing) on the Mac, but.... you guessed it!
not on the STe.

I've tried to "zero disk" using Hcopy to clear any information on it,
but still no go. Is the disk bad? I don't think so as it works on the
platform it was formatted on, so what other options are left to rule
this out?

Well, I have a Yamaha TX-16W sampler (music instrument for recording
audio). It's got a DD disk drive and formats the MSX-DOS operating
system which is *almost* 100% MSDOS compatible.

You have to format the disks for the sampler in the sampler itself, but
once that's done you can read/write to it on any Atari ST, Mac, PC etc..

So I formatted the disk in the TX-16W. It verified fine.
I put it in my STe -it worked fine.
I put it in the Mac -again it worked fine!

Then I reformatted it on the STe using "Hcopy". Tried it on the Mac and
it.... worked fine!!!

So what does all of this mean? Is there some kind of data which normally
isn't deleted when formatted the usual way? Apparently the TX-16W could
remove it.
And this isn't a one-off incident. I've tried it many times with many
disks.

Can anyone shed any light to this and perhaps offer a simpler solution?"

'Chris' tells Hallvard:

"Use PC formatted disks. They can be read by the Mac or Atari. Works
with Zip disks on my Falcon/G3."

Hugh Lutley asks...

"I'm interested in doing my invoices on my falcon but I need to know
what printers I can use with it. I have an oldish Bubblejet... could
that be used with my old thang?"

Steve Sweet tells Hugh:

"I have used a DeskJet 560C and a 520 with my ST, via NVDI."

G.R. Greenway adds:

"I'm using a H.P. Deskjet 610C. I wonder if that's the last

"proper" non brain-dead Windoze printer they'll produce? The mono
and colour output are both fine, but I lack the software to tweak the
alignment of the cartridge."

Peter West adds his knowledge to the mix:

"Almost any parallel-port printer can be used with the Falcon, *provided*
you have the correct driver for it (or can adapt an existing one). Does
your Bubblejet support the HP commands, or Canon's? If the former than
any Laserjet driver can be used - but some older programs only have
drivers for pin-printers or offer a limited number of commands that can
be entered for a given setting, which may not be enough for an HP-type
printer.

A lot depends on what program you are using to generate your invoices.
I still do most of mine in 1st Word Plus, which has drivers for most
printers. If you use NVDI and the text program supports GDOS output,
there is a very wide range of printer drivers available. Even more can
be found in IdeaList, which allows more layout control of ASCII text or
1st Word files for printing."

Derek Hunt asks about problems he's having with email:

"Over the last 2 days I have been getting some trouble with my
emails. Your thoughts,advice etc would be appreciated.

I am using,as you can see from the headers,NEWSIE 0.96 to collect my
mail and newsgroups. All goes well to download my news for Offline
reading,over to "Get Mail" and,providing there is something there
NEWSIE starts to download it. If (just as an example) there are say 4
messages the first 3 come through with no problem the last one will
start to download,hits roughly 4116 bytes (status window) and bombs
with 2 bombs and sends me to the Desktop.

Going back to NEWSIE and opening the Mailbox shows it is empty, BUT if
I go back to the Desktop and open the NEWSIE file and then the Mail
Folder the 4 messages are there to be read. The last one (In this case
MAIL004.TXT) is incomplete. THIS MESSAGE IS FROM THE SAME SOURCE (same
message to be honest) each time. Deleting it makes no difference,
leaving it in the Folder only means I start a collection of the same
files in the folder.

Any thoughts on how to get rid of this email? I have tried wiping
NEWSIE completely and starting afresh."

John Garone tells Derek:

"If you haven't already, try using "Get Selected Mail" and delete the
file on the server without downloading it."

Derek tells John:

"I have tried that but as I explained the emails just are not seen by
NEWSIE,thats those before the offending one,and as NEWSIE reads the
last one it bombs out throwing me back to the desktop.The mails can be
found though by manually entering the MAIL folder."

John replies:

"Newsie still may show the list to download (get selected mail) even

if the mail does'nt show in the box. It's happened only once to me but
it was a royal pain in the butt to have to go through my ISP to delete
it! I'm not sure whether it was visible or not (been a while) but I
saved it for John R. in case he got around to working on the problem.
It's buried somewhere in my files but I believe it was from
fruitstick@earthlink.net"

'Keeper of the flame' in Syracuse, Tom Andrews, adds:

"I had the same problem with one particular email and Newsie 0.94. I
use a local ISP. I called them and asked if they could delete the
offending email, and after confirming I was who I said I was, they did.
I haven't had any trouble since."

Kenneth Medin adds his experiences:

"Get Popwatch from http://www.the-gap.demon.co.uk/

This program is simple to setup and can retrieve the dodgy(?) email
to a local file and delete it on the server. I have used Popwatch for
a couple of years and it works very well.

Popwatch can be set up to perform all online activity for Newsie as
well. In combination with Newswatch you hardly need to go online with
Newsie at all."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Hasbro Interactive Sold!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Infogrames Gets Atari Rights!
                                    Looking For A PlayStation2?
                                    JagFest Update! And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    Hasbro To Sell Games to Infogrames

Hasbro Inc. warned its fourth quarter earnings will fall below expectations

and said full-year earnings would be break-even ``at best."

The warning came as the toy maker announced the sale of its interactive games divisions and licensing of many of its most well-known products to Infogrames Entertainment for $100 million.

Shares of the Pawtucket-based company fell 16 percent to $9.69 a share in after-hours trading after finishing the regular session down 19 cents at $11.56 on the New York Stock Exchange.

Hasbro said it may post a loss for fiscal 2000 of 10 cents and 20 cents a share before one-time items. Analysts surveyed by First Call/Thomson Financial had pegged earnings for the year at 43 cents per share. Estimates for the quarter had been 23 cents per share.

``The reduced expectations can be attributed in large part to the decline in worldwide revenue of trading card games. Frankly, while Pokemon Trading Card Game cards are still selling well, we were too aggressive in our forecast following incredible demand in 1999 and 2000," said Alan G. Hassenfeld, chairman and CEO.

Hasbro will halve its quarterly dividend to 3 cents from 6 cents per share, effective Feb. 15. The move is expected to save $21 million annually.

The company also has increased the number of planned job cuts, from up to 550 announced in October, to 750 jobs.

The sale of Hasbro Interactive gives the company a long-term revenue stream and relieves the company of two divisions that have lost a significant amount of money in the last two years, spokesman Wayne Charness said.

``This has been a difficult business for us," he said. ``This partnership is an important step toward sustaining long-term profitability."

Infogrames, which makes games for PlayStation and Nintendo, will acquire Hasbro Interactive, based in Beverly, Mass., and Games.com, Hasbro's game portal on the Web.

The French company will get full rights to Atari and Micropose, including the popular Roller Coaster Tycoon game.

Infogrames also will gain exclusive rights for 15 years to develop interactive versions of Hasbro products such as Monopoly, Scrabble and Mr. Potato Head.

Charness would not say how much Hasbro expects to earn from the licensing deal. Infogames will pay Hasbro $5 million cash and $95 million in stock for all the outstanding shares of Hasbro Interactive.

The sale, which requires regulatory and shareholder approval, is expected to close by the end of the first quarter of 2001.

                    Infogrames Entertainment to Acquire Hasbro
                         Interactive and Games.com

Infogrames Entertainment SA and Hasbro, Inc. jointly announced that they have entered into a strategic agreement, creating one of the foremost

powerhouses in the mass market digital interactive entertainment world. The agreement is comprised of three main elements, including the Infogrames acquisition of Hasbro Interactive; a long-term licensing agreement giving Infogrames exclusive rights to develop and publish digital interactive games based on current and future Hasbro properties on all existing and future digital interactive formats; and the acquisition of Games.com.

Infogrames will purchase 100% of the common stock of Hasbro Interactive and Games.com for $100 million - comprised of $95 million in Infogrames Entertainment SA securities (approximately 4.5 million common shares) and $5 million in cash. In addition, Hasbro will receive an annual guarantee from Infogrames based on sales generated from the licensing agreement. The agreements are subject to the approval of the shareholders of Infogrames, regulatory approval and other customary closing conditions. The companies expect the deal to close early in the first calendar quarter of 2001.

''Infogrames and Hasbro are truly poised to become worldwide leaders in the digital entertainment market," said Bruno Bonnell, Chairman and CEO of Infogrames. ''Infogrames' external growth strategy consists of three requirements: a willingness of the prospective partner's management to share our strategic vision, a complementary set of skills and products, and finally, value for our shareholders. The Hasbro Interactive and Games.com acquisition meets these criteria," said Mr. Bonnell. ''Infogrames' access to Hasbro's long list of well-known properties fits perfectly with our long-term publishing strategy to become the leader in family entertainment. The terms are beneficial for Infogrames Entertainment, since they have no direct impact on the company's future investment capacity."

''This arrangement with Infogrames is a very positive one for Hasbro on many different levels," said Alan Hassenfeld, Hasbro's Chairman and CEO. ''First, we have aligned ourselves with a premier player in the interactive arena. Second, this strategic agreement with Infogrames meshes with our strategy of reducing costs as we focus on consistently delivering profits going forward. Third, this arrangement will provide a continuing revenue stream to Hasbro over the long-term through Infogrames' expertise in leveraging our current and future properties."

The agreement is comprised of three main elements:

Infogrames Entertainment's acquisition of 100% of the common stock of Hasbro Interactive, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc.

The acquisition gives Infogrames a catalog of titles based on well-known properties, including:

   * The MICROPROSE brand and titles, including the international hit
     CIVILIZATION, FALCON, and ROLLER COASTER TYCOON, the number one
     selling PC game in the US according to PC DATA'S latest report.
   * The legendary ATARI name and properties, such as CENTIPEDE, MISSILE
     COMMAND, and the historic PONG, which pioneered the video game
     revolution.

The exclusive rights to develop and publish interactive games based on current and future Hasbro, Inc. properties, including:

   * The interactive versions of popular Hasbro board games, which include
     MONOPOLY, SCRABBLE(1), CLUE, RISK, AND BOGGLE.
   * The interactive versions of children's games and toys, such as MR.
     POTATO HEAD, TONKA TRUCKS, ACTION MAN, MY LITTLE PONY, and CANDYLAND.
   * The massively multi-player game DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS.

Under the terms of the agreement, Infogrames gains the rights through a licensing agreement with Hasbro to develop games based on Hasbro properties for a period of 15 years plus an option for an additional 5 years based on performance, on all existing and future digital interactive formats. Terms of the licensing agreement are consistent with other traditional Infogrames' Entertainment licensing agreements.

These formats include: current and next-generation video game consoles such as Sony PlayStation2, Microsoft Xbox, Sega Dreamcast, and Nintendo GameBoy Advance and GameCube, personal computers, broadband networks, interactive television, cellular telephones, arcade, and hand-held devices (PDAs). In keeping with its global multi-platform strategy, Infogrames will leverage Hasbro's unmatched content by developing titles on a variety of platforms that appeal to a global market.

These Hasbro Interactive brands, together with Hasbro's owned brands, make up a catalog of more than 200 family titles that are being managed by a team of mass market product experts who have helped Hasbro Interactive succeed in becoming the third largest PC publisher in the U.S.

Additionally, approximately 60 titles are currently in development, including PlayStation2 and Xbox versions of franchises from HASBRO, MICROPROSE and ATARI: ZOO TYCOON, MONOPOLY, MICRO MACHINES, TWISTER, CIRCUS MAXIMUS, CIVILIZATION, AND GRAND PRIX 4.

Infogrames will also seek out additional partnership opportunities with telecommunications providers, media companies and hardware manufacturers to bring these franchises to other platforms.

The long term licensing agreement combines Hasbro's expertise in developing successful mass-market properties and Infogrames' expertise in bringing top properties to the digital interactive market.

Hasbro's catalog of games and toys will be strengthened by their digital interactive counterparts, published and globally distributed by Infogrames. In addition, Infogrames' titles based on Hasbro properties will benefit from Hasbro's powerful marketing programs for their games and toys.

As part of the agreement, Infogrames acquires Games.com, an online games portal launching in early 2001. Games.com has already attracted over four million visitors to its site, with more than one million people having already registered to receive information about its launch.

At its launch, Games.com will allow visitors to play more than 30 online games based on Hasbro properties, some of which include MONOPOLY, CLUE, SCRABBLE(1), ASTEROIDS, and RISK. In addition, visitors to the site can find news, information, tips and hints about games featured on Games.com.

Visitors to the site will also have the ability to chat with other players and participate in tournaments based on widely recognized games from the Hasbro catalog. Games.com's revenue strategy includes e-commerce, sponsorships and individual subscriptions. Infogrames plans to extend Games.com to broadband users in the future.

For additional information, Infogrames has posted a detailed presentation on today's announcement at www.infogrames.com and www.infogrames-corporate.com.

Old PlayStation Tops Holiday Game Console Sales

As expected, Sony has the top-selling game console at the start of the holiday shopping season. But it is the PSone, a repackaged version of the 5-year-old original PlayStation, that is topping sales charts, not the new and impossible-to-buy PlayStation 2.

Market researcher PC Data reported Tuesday that the PSone was the top-selling game player for the week ending Nov. 25, capturing 42 percent of the market and claiming the top spot for the third consecutive week.

The PlayStation 2 accounted for just 6 percent of the market, as supplies all but dried up. Sega's Dreamcast and the Nintendo 64 came in second and third with 27 percent and 26 percent market share, respectively.

Sony released the PSone, a repackaged version of the original PlayStation, three months ago to the befuddlement of some analysts. It is unusual for a game console maker to keep an old format alive after it introduces a new one, and Sony's efforts to position the PSone as a somewhat-portable device were muddled.

But the PSone has enjoyed an unexpected advantage over the PS2: You can buy one.

Component shortages led Sony to cut in half the initial shipments when it introduced the PS2 in North America in October. The company has yet to ramp up production to expected levels, leading to frenzied competition for the few units available through stores and online auctions.

With its $99 price tag--compared with $299 for the PS2--the PSone looks like a good deal for parents ready to outfit their kids with their first game player, said Matt Gravett, game analyst for PC Data.

"I don't think the masses of people buying a PSone are necessarily the ones who went out looking for a PlayStation 2," he said. "I think some parents thought they could get the PS2 for their kids. Now they see they can't, and the PSone looks like a pretty good deal."

Sony's supply problems may also be helping Sega. The company experienced the biggest holiday boost, with Dreamcast sales jumping 104 percent the week of Nov. 19, compared with the previous week, PC Data reported. Nintendo 64 sales jumped 76 percent. PSone sales climbed 58 percent, while PlayStation 2 sales declined 71 percent because of the supply crunch.

"Dreamcast sales have been on the rise since they dropped the price back (to $150) in September," Gravett said. "They had a great week. Almost everyone did, except for PS2."

PS2bargains.com Helps Online Shoppers Find PlayStation 2 Video Game Console

PS2bargains.com is keeping an eye on the top online retailers and reporting updates on where and when you can buy a PlayStation 2 (PS2) video game console.

This holiday season has been wrought with scams, unfulfilled promises and misinformation as a result of the high demand and low supply of PS2. An online community has formed at PS2bargains.com to help protect, inform and notify shoppers looking for this hard to find video game system. At PS2bargains.com, online shoppers are sharing information about where to find a PS2, when they will be available for sale and which sites are potentially conning shoppers out of their holiday dollars.

Online retailers sell hundreds of PlayStation 2 consoles each week. The problem is no one knows when or where they will be for sale. PS2bargains.com clears up some of the confusion by posting online sale information on their web site. If a retailer puts any PS2's up for sale, visitors to the site will find out immediately.

In addition to the PlayStation 2 availability reports, PS2bargains.com offers valuable coupons, bargains and other discounts from the top online game retailers.

PS2bargains.com is the sister site of BargainFlix.com (http://www.bargainflix.com), one of the top DVD Internet sites over the last two years, offering coupons, specials, news and reviews on DVD movies.

``Our original plan for the site was to create the PlayStation 2 version of BargainFlix," says Greg Bottorff, president of PS2bargains.com .

Online coupons and bargains for thrifty shoppers remain the site's focus, however, Bottorff says they have shifted into ``find-it" mode for the holiday season. According to Bottorff, ``Right now, the goal of the site is to let consumers know ahead of time where they will be able to get PlayStation 2 for the holidays."

PlayStation 2 is the hottest holiday gift this year. PS2bargains.com hopes they can help put as many as possible in the hands of those that want the video game system.

Mad Catz Announces Licensed Memory Card for PlayStation 2

Mad Catz, a subsidiary of GTR Group Inc., and a leading manufacturer of video game accessories, announced that it has signed a license agreement with Sony Computer Entertainment Europe to license its 8-megabyte (``MB") memory card for the PlayStation2 computer system.

The SCEE license allows Mad Catz to manufacture and sell a licensed memory card throughout Europe and in the PAL territories, including Australia, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and numerous other countries. The European/ PAL territories license follows that of a similar North American license. The Mad Catz 8 MB memory card marks the first officially licensed memory card for any PlayStation system. The agreement means Mad Catz's memory cards will work with all compatible PlayStation2 software. Unlicensed memory cards have no such assurance. Memory cards are expected to account for an overwhelming one-third of all accessories sold for the PlayStation2.

The new 8 MB memory cards will have a storage capacity of 8 megabytes of data (64 times the original PlayStation memory card capacity), as well as a data transfer rate of up to 250 times faster than the current memory card. The new memory cards will be blue and contain several innovative design

features that Mad Catz is famous for.

''This is a fantastic development for Mad Catz because Mad Catz will be the only company at launch with a licensed third-party memory card with the "MagicGate'' Encryption Technology", said Darren Richardson, president of Mad Catz. ''Without access to the MagicGate technology, it is not possible to produce a fully compatible memory card for the PlayStation2," added Richardson.

                    Infogrames Sends Sega Dreamcast Into Orbit
                     This Week With Looney Tunes: Space Race

Forget making that left at Albuquerque Bugs, you're on the wrong planet! Infogrames, Inc. announced that it is bringing everyone's favorite Looney Tunes characters to life in Looney Tunes: Space Race, an out-of-this-world kart-style racing game for Sega Dreamcast available at stores this week. All is fair in love and racing, so stock up on gags and traps and get ready to rocket!

The ACME Corporation, maker of the universe's most sought after products, is the sponsor of the wildest race of the new Mil-Looney-Um, Looney Tunes: Space Race. The game's objective is to achieve the top prize -- a lifetime supply of ACME products! Up to four players will take on the role of eight different Looney Tunes characters and their outrageously unique rocket-powered space vehicles including Bugs Bunny in his Carrot Racer and Elmer Fudd in his Sabre Jet. Inspired by the world of Looney Tunes, players will race through graphically rich, intricately detailed environments and interact with other characters in genuine Looney Tunes style, placing them in the middle of a lifelike Looney Tunes' cartoon.

''Looney Tunes: Space Race is a refreshing break from traditional arcade-style racing -- it stars the famous Looney Tunes characters, features the classic comedy elements of the Warner Bros. cartoons and combines them with a space age take on kart racing," said Jeff Nuzzi, director of marketing for Infogrames' I-Stars Label. ''Players of all ages will marvel at the beautiful, vibrant graphics and the fluid, realistic gameplay showcased by the Dreamcast technology."

In the only racing game of its kind with licensed characters for the Dreamcast, players will race through 12 unique Looney Tunes inspired tracks such as Off World City, the Asteroid Belt and Planet ACME. Each track features unique environmental gags, challenging jumps, tunnels, shortcuts and traps players can use to help them get ahead in the race. In addition to the eight playable characters, there are seven more popular Looney Tunes characters that make special appearances, including Foghorn Leghorn who stars as the event announcer and Lola Bunny as the track-side reporter.

Developed by Infogrames' Melbourne House, Looney Tunes: Space Race is available at an estimated retail price of $29.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

                    THQ Ships 'Evil Dead: Hail To The King' for PlayStation

THQ announced the release of ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" for PlayStation.

''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" is based on the ''Evil Dead" movie trilogy that earned a cult following among millions of horror fans with its gory effects, campy humor and ultra-cool hero, ''Ash," played by Bruce Campbell.

Campbell is back to reprise his signature role in ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" where he returns to the infamous cabin in the woods to battle deadites on a quest to save his girlfriend, Jenny.

Developed with full support of creators Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert, and Bruce Campbell, ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" invites players into an authentic ''Evil Dead" survival horror adventure. ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" is now available at major retail outlets nationwide.

''Working with THQ on the development of 'Evil Dead: Hail To The King' has been a blast," stated Bruce Campbell, star of the ''Evil Dead" trilogy. ''It was great to reprise the role of Ash in 'Evil Dead: Hail To The King' without having to get beaten up like in the movies."

'''Evil Dead: Hail To The King' puts a new spin on the survival horror genre by combining the successful formula of extreme action, cliff-hanging plot lines, and puzzle-solving with Ash's signature humor," stated Scott Krager, executive producer, THQ. ''As a huge fan of the movie trilogy, I was thrilled to be able to work with the "Evil Dead'' creators in bringing the first games to the millions of fans anxiously waiting to play as the chainsaw-armed hero."

In ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King," players assume the role of Ash, the chainsaw-armed hero from the ''Evil Dead" trilogy, in a story that continues the ongoing saga of the Necronomicon ex Mortis, otherwise known as ''Book of the Dead."

When Ash returns to the cabin in the woods, he is faced with the challenge of battling over 20 startling enemies including deadites, skeletons, and even Evil Ash with freedom to move and attack with multiple weapons simultaneously.

Gamers are offered fully upgradable weapons including the axe, rifle, shotgun and chainsaw in combat. Huge environments include a blend of favorite ''Evil Dead" settings and brand new locations that serve to expand the ''Evil Dead" universe.

Offering a wide variety of enemies, puzzles and settings, the story unfolds with several in-game and pre-rendered sequences. ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" for PlayStation mixes the fun of a campy horror movie with intense combat sequences and clever puzzle-solving.

For more information on ''Evil Dead: Hail To The King" games visit www.evildeadgame.com and for the rest of THQ's holiday lineup, visit www.thq.com.

Max Steel: Covert Missions for Sega Dreamcast
Now Available in Stores Nationwide

Mattel Media and Sony Pictures Entertainment announced the availability of Max Steel: Covert Missions.

Driven by a successful television series from Sony Pictures Family Entertainment and an extensive line of action figures through Sony Pictures Consumer Products, the multi-million dollar brand by Mattel soars to a new level. In this all-new action thriller for the Segafi DreamCast(TM), players won't just be watching him on TV -- they will be the ones controlling his destiny and the fate of the free world. The game is available for an estimated retail price of $39.99.

In this third-person shooter/adventure game, the terrorist group D.R.E.A.D has kidnapped Max Steel's boss and has stolen a deadly biological weapon to ravage the world and create it anew. Only one obstacle stands in their way, Max Steel. Enhanced with powerful nano-technology and armed with an arsenal of high-tech weapons, Max Steel will need to use his superhuman strength and blazing speed to rescue his boss and prevent D.R.E.A.D. from achieving its goal of world domination.

''Continuing Mattel Media's effort to broaden its offering of titles to boys of all ages, we are bringing to life Max Steel, one of the coolest spies in history," said Amy Boylan, senior vice president of Mattel Media. ''Players can now experience first-hand all of the intrigue and mystery of being an undercover agent."

Eight unique levels and missions lead up to the climactic showdown with Dawn Shadow, where players can fight in hand-to-hand combat or choose from a large selection of lethal gadgets and weapons including trip wires, repeater guns and sniper rifles. Stealth mode allows gamers to slip by their enemies undetected or go turbo for staggering strength and speed. Highly detailed 3D effects and more than 65 unique animations bring Max Steel to life, while the compelling storyline propels the game forward, throwing the player into Max's world of high-tech terrorism.

Mattel Media Ships Tyco R/C Racin' Ratz
to Retail Stores Nationwide

Tyco R/C Racin' Ratz Gives Game Boy Color Players
a Dose of RAT-itude!

Mattel Media announced the availability of Tyco R/C Racin' Ratz for Game Boy Color. Racin' Ratz, based on the smaller scale radio-controlled vehicle toys, is Mattel Media's first Tyco R/C title for Game Boy Color. The title delivers a challenging game experience for all ages and features a variety of puzzles and hazard-ridden levels. Racin' Ratz is rated 'E' for Everyone by the ESRB and is currently available in retail stores nationwide for an estimated retail price of $29.99.

In Racin' Ratz, players take on the role of either Chris or Betty and can wreak havoc with their R/C vehicles while trying to complete more than 25 missions through 10 exciting levels. Kids snag as many household items as they can get as they tear through the bedroom, the living room, grandma's house, the garage and other areas of the house.

''With Racin' Ratz on Game Boy Color, Mattel has given kids a whole new dimension of R/C fun," said Amy Boylan, senior vice president, Mattel Media. ''In Racin' Ratz, kids have a chance to do things with R/C vehicles

that would be impossible in the physical world."

During each mission, gamers search for power-ups that help them make the Racin' Ratz cars jump across furniture, climb obstacles and shrink the size of the car to race through tight gaps. In addition to finding the right power-ups, players must solve a variety of puzzles before successfully completing each level. To extend the challenge and fun of Racin' Ratz, kids also can unlock the intense Boss Level to dual against another Racin' Ratz, cat or bird, as well as discover other hidden levels.

Activision and Disney Interactive's Disney/Pixar's Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command Touches Down at Retail

Buzz Lightyear will burst onto retail shelves nationwide when Activision, Inc., Disney Interactive and Pixar Animation Studios release Disney/Pixar's Buzz Lightyear of Star Command for Nintendo Game Boy Color. Based on the new animated television series, Disney/Pixar's Buzz Lightyear of Star Command video game is rated ''E" by the ESRB and is currently available for a suggested retail price of $29.99.

Disney/Pixar's Buzz Lightyear of Star Command is a third-person, all-action adventure in which players take on the role of the gung-ho, galactic space hero Buzz Lightyear. Players explore dynamic environments and plush levels, while meeting a multitude of characters from the series including Zeb Nebula, Mira, Booster, Little Green Men and others. Gamers are charged to fight the Evil Emperor Zurg and his minions in an ongoing saga that features awesome action elements, high-tech space-ranger abilities and a variety of over-the-top, retro-futuristic worlds like Trade World, Karn, Gargantua and Planet Z.

EA Ships NCAA March Madness 2001 for the Playstation

Electronic Arts has announced that it's shipping EA SPORTS NCAA March Madness 2001 for The PlayStation.

March Madness 2001 brings the college basketball video game experience to the next level with many new and updated features from the 2000 edition.

''March Madness 2001 is the most realistic college basketball experience ever for the PlayStation," said executive producer David DeMartini. ''The addition of the Coach Mode challenges gamers to build their coaching resume from the ground up until they reach the 'big-time,' and the 64 All-Time Top-Teams allow the top teams of today to match up against the classics to determine court supremacy. Once again, with the assistance of NBA star Steve Francis, Dynamic Ball Control will deliver amazing, ankle-breaking moves that leave defenders looking at a trail of rubber. March Madness 2001 is a true college basketball experience."

Coach Mode is the newest addition to March Madness' stable of gameplay modes. This feature allows masters of the ''X's and O's" to work their way up from a small college to ''shoe contract-U" where they vie for the NCAA title. EA SPORTS also welcomes back an old friend: College basketball legend and Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski. Coach K lent his vast knowledge

of basketball to the production team for Coach Mode in order to ensure that March Madness 2001 captured all the ins and outs of coaching college hoops. The last time EA SPORTS and Coach K teamed up, the duo produced the classic title Coach K College Basketball.

New unlockable dribbling moves have been added to the Dynamic Ball Control feature and are guaranteed to electrify. 1999-2000 NBA Co-Rookie of the Year Steve Francis made sure of this by bringing his on-court wizardry once again to the March Madness franchise. More than 20 of Francis' best moves were motion captured, as well as the dunks he performed in the 2000 NBA dunk contest. All are available (to be unlocked) in March Madness 2001.

Team-specific playbooks and play styles let gamers run up the score with Duke or slow it down with the back-door offense of Princeton. Fast-break artificial intelligence has been improved allowing players to run the floor in the fast break and hit the wing for the three-ball or the cutter for an easy lay-up. In addition, Dynasty Mode has been expanded, for those who want to dabble in the behind the scenes and off-season action of college basketball.

So, you think that the 1990 UNLV team is the best ever, but your buddy thinks that any of the UCLA teams from the 1970's could take them? March Madness 2001 features an All-Time Top-Teams Tournament that enables players to drive the road to the Final Fourﬁ with the top 64 teams of all-time, allowing gamers to settle age-old arguments on the court instead of with debates and statistics.

As always, March Madness 2001 brings to life an authentic college atmosphere delivering the excitement and intensity that is college hoops. Authentic college fight songs performed by their marching bands as well as team-specific chants and cheers produce a true-to-life college basketball feel, immersing gamers to the point where they feel like they are in a college arena. Gamers can choose from more than 150 men's Division I teams, 16 women's Division I teams, and 20 historical men's teams to go to battle.

March Madness 2001 is delivered in a TV-style presentation with more than ten adjustable camera angles and instant replay with a full 360 degree view. Adding to the realism are detailed player ratings supplied by Broadband Sports based upon 2000-01 rosters, weekly Top-25 Polls listing conference and overall standings and ``Championship Week" tournaments representing all conference postseason tournaments, each with their own unique brackets and layouts. March Madness 2001 also welcomes two new recruits to campus in quip-meister Bill Raftery doing color and Verne Lundquist handling the play-by-play duties.

March Madness 2001 is rated ``E" (Everyone) by the ESRB and is analog controller compatible supporting up to eight players.

Mounties Launch Probe Into PlayStation 2 Net Store

Canadian police have launched an investigation into a Web store that customers say sold them Sony PlayStation 2 consoles but has yet to deliver them.

Detective Barry Elliott of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed Monday that his office is investigating the company that runs Web sites PS2storecanada.com and PS2storeusa.com, but declined to give

specifics.

On Friday, the main branches of the Canadian and U.S. Better Business Bureaus issued a warning to consumers about Web sites that falsely advertise the availability of popular electronic games. The warning came after hundreds of customers from both countries complained they had paid for but did not receive a console.

Scott Byers, the operator of the Web sites, told CNET News.com on Friday that he shipped consoles to every customer who paid for one. He said the problems stem from a different Web store that operated under the same name--PS2storecanda.com--which ran off with its customers' money. Customers had mixed up the two companies, Byers said.

"We are a new company getting together slowly," said Byers, who is from New Brunswick, Canada. "If I was a fraud, would I be trying to clear my name? I'd be long gone."

He said that Sony had agreed to give him access to 15,000 PlayStation 2 consoles.

"If he has 15,000 PlayStation 2s, then I have a Lear jet in my office," said a Sony representative. "That's how ridiculous it is. I've given his name to the authorities-Needless to say he does not have 15,000 PlayStation 2s."

Sony said that only authorized dealers are receiving the consoles and that Byer's Web sites are not among them.

Like Beenie Babies, Cabbage Patch Kids and Tickle Me Elmo dolls before it, the popular console has touched off a wild search by thousands of consumers. Some sites selling the PlayStation 2 have crashed under the waves of game hunters.

That, perhaps, is why some customers agreed to send photocopies of their credit cards--front and back--to Byers' sites. The credit card companies have said this is highly unusual and that sensitive information is printed on the cards.

A series of safety measures are in place, however, that prevent the information from being used by someone other than the owner said Visa International spokeswoman Cheryl Heinonen.

She strongly recommended that consumers never fax photocopies of their credit cards to any store and that they shop at well-known and reputable stores.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
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                    Jagfest 2K1 Plans Made Official

December 2, 2000 - Go Beyond Tempest at Jagfest 2K1

The GOAT Store, an online store specializing in the support of classic video games, has agreed to host Jagfest 2K1 in Milwaukee, WI on June 30, 2001. The fifth annual event that centers around the Atari Jaguar system, but will be expanding as it has in the past to include all classic video game systems and even classic computers.

"The event is going to be subtitled, 'Beyond Tempest'," said Dan Loosen of the GOAT Store, "because with all of the great products that have come out for the Jaguar in the past year, it is definitely true that we have moved beyond the storm of doubt and disbelief and can now look at a very bright future for the Jaguar and all of Atari."

This years event will include an exhibit of every Jaguar game ever made, rare Atari games, systems, prototypes and many more surprises! There will also be a vast array of tournaments, with the GOAT Store supplying prizes to the winners.

Admission for this years event will be $8.00 for pre-registers and $10.00 for tickets at the door. Tickets will go on sale January 1, 2001.

"Jagfest is a great opportunity for anyone with an interest in Atari to explore many rare and one-of-a-kind items and meet some new friends while doing it!" said Gary Heil. "I think that Milwaukee is a great location, and we will build on the success of past Jagfests to make Beyond Tempest into the best Jagfest yet."

Please make sure to visit the Official Jagfest 2K1: Beyond Tempest Web site at the GOAT Store (http://www.goatstore.com). Dan Loosen can be reached at loosen@goatstore.com and Gary Heil can be reached at heil@goatstore.com for more information.

The GOAT Store Announces 2600 JAMMA Release Dates

December 8, 2000 - The GOAT Store Announces 2600 JAMMA Release Dates

The GOAT Store today announced that they have completed work on their two new GOAT Store Exclusive products, the 2600 JAMMA Joystick and the slightly larger brother, the 2600 JAMMA Joystick LX. These two joysticks, the second in a series that the GOAT Store hand builds and sells to collectors, is made from real JAMMA arcade parts.

"The JAMMA Joysticks series are products that I really have enjoyed creating, building and selling," said Dan Loosen of the GOAT Store. "Our Jaguar JAMMA Joystick series has been a huge success for us. We hope that enthusiasts for the 2600 find this joystick just as useful!"

The 2600 JAMMA Joystick (Retail price - $41.90) and the 2600 JAMMA Joystick LX (Retail price - $46.90) will go on sale Monday December 11, 2000. Please direct any questions to The GOAT (thegoat@goatstore.com).

From Jaguar Interactive 2:

Hasbro Interactive for sale....

A source close to Infogrames Inc. has told GameWEEK.com that a deal is
close to being completed that will have Infogrames buying Hasbro
Interactive. Such a deal would build up Infogrames' software library with
such properties as Frogger, Monopoly and RollerCoaster Tycoon, as well as
Atari's catalog of game brands. It would also enable Infogrames to leap
right into the online-game market, thanks to the inclusion of Hasbro's
Games.com network, which is currently in beta testing and slated for public
consumption later this month.

GameWEEK.com reported in October that toy giant Hasbro was "exploring
strategic alternatives" for the interactive portion of the business, with
the end result being anything: A spokesperson was quoted then as saying
that Hasbro Interactive could end up as a "sale, partial sale, joint
venture or continue as is."

For Infogrames, this would add serious weight to the company; with good and
bad potential. The addition of such recognizable brands is something that
many game publishers would like to have; however, Infogrames still hasn't
seemed to consolidated efficiently after its purchase of GT Interactive.
Adding Hasbro Interactive to the mix would likely create some serious
logistical and workforce considerations for the company.

No information as to how much the deal would be worth was provided, and
calls for comment by GameWEEK.com to Hasbro, Hasbro Interactive and
Infogrames weren't returned by the time this story was posted.

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                        A-ONE's Headline News
                  The Latest in Computer Technology News
                      Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                  3Com Debuts Audrey, Internet Appliance

3Com Corp. on Tuesday unveiled a home Internet appliance named Audrey that
provides electronic mail, Web access, a calendar, address book and
synchronization capability for personal digital assistants.

''Audrey marks 3Com's entrance into a virtually untapped high-growth
consumer market and represents 3Com's strategic focus on providing radical
simplicity to the consumer," Eric Benhamou, 3Com chairman and chief
executive, said in a statement.

The product is available in the United States at a starting price of $499
and can be bought online (http://www.3Com.com/ergo) or at retailers.

Audrey works with various Internet service providers and give consumers
access to favorite Web sites. A user can scribble a hand-written message,
type or speak a message and send it to the Internet by using a stylus.

Audrey features a built in V.90 56K modem and can be set to dial into the Internet several times per day to refresh its Internet channels and download new e-mail. Audrey is also adaptable to broadband connections.

Compaq to Add New Wireless Port to Laptops

Compaq said on Tuesday it would add a new port to its laptop computers that would allow consumers to surf the Internet and connect to other computer devices wirelessly.

Compaq said the MultiPort located in the back of the notebooks would be compatible with 802.11b wireless local area network (LAN) and Bluetooth short-distance wireless technologies.

The company said chipmaker Intel Corp. has designed a new wireless LAN product that is compatible with MultiPort. When Intel's product is connected to the MultiPort, consumers would be able to connect wirelessly to a high-speed physical connection through a hub.

As Bluetooth products are introduced, consumers would also be able to take advantage of Bluetooth products that would allow computer devices to communicate with their laptops through the same port.

Compaq said it expects to introduce MultiPort into its commercial notebook line-up starting in the spring of 2001.

Netscape 6.0 Likened to Fashion Show

Netscape has unleashed Version 6.0, the Web browser that looks like a fashion show.

Available for the PC, Mac and Linux platforms, Netscape 6.0 has taken Version 4.7, the dependable browser in a Wall Street business suit, and moved it to the East Village, complete with nose ring and dyed orange hair.

The default interface is consciously hip-looking. Like those tall platform shoes, it's stylish, but not right for everyone. In this case, the look is a ''theme."

You can revert to the ''classic" theme in which the stop button looks like a stoplight instead of an ''X." And there are other themes available for download on the Web site (http://www.netscape.com).

Those of us who associate ''hip" only with ''replacement" will grumble that if you're worried about which theme your browser is wearing today, you need to get a life. But if you can get past that and some other annoyances, you'll find a solid technical underpinning.

The main toolbar URL field of Netscape 6.0 does double duty as a search field, so you don't have to hop to a search page first to start looking for something. (The browser uses - surprise! - Netscape search as the default.)

The ''sidebar," a window at the left of the page that can display

real-time information (or just about anything else you want), can be
distracting, but you can make it disappear. In, fact, you can customize a
bundle of things, which is OK if that's how you want to spend your time.

Both 6.0 and 4.7 versions can run simultaneously, good if you've download
the newer version and are ambivalent about it. After some time running
both, 4.7 still gets the nod if you're in a hurry to see all your
bookmarks, which it displays in multiple columns while 6.0 shows them in a
single column that scrolls. But 6.0 is better at handling multiple e-mail
accounts, if you're into using aliases.

Netscape claims the later version is faster, but it wasn't all that
noticeable in side-by-side tests on the same PC. The password and cookie
manager functions are good, if privacy is a concern. The browser also has
links to plenty of Internet content, making it an information source of
sorts, perhaps the ruboff from corporate parent America Online.

If you must have the latest (and won't bow to Microsoft's Internet
Explorer), the price is right: The download is free, or you can get a
CD-ROM by mail for $5.95.

Even on a fast Ethernet connection at the office, downloading the PC
version took about 14 minutes. Depending on the speed of your Internet
connection and any toll charges that might be involved, the ''free"
download might not be so free.

For most users, it's a question of style and taste, and the only way to
decide is to try it. Beforehand, note the system requirements for Netscape
6.0 as given on the Web site:

-Windows 95, 98, 2000 or NT 4.0: Pentium, 133 MHz, 64 MB of RAM.

-Mac OS 8.5, OS 8.6 or OS 9 with PowerPC: 200 MHz PowerPC 604 or G3, 64 MB
of RAM, with virtual memory turned on (or 48 MB of dynamic RAM).

-Red Hat Linux 6.1: Pentium, 133 MHz, 64 MB of RAM.

The site also cautions, ''If you are running Netscape 6.0 on SuSe Linux
6.2, you must install the file ''libjpeg.so.62," which it has available
for download.

                        Opera Offers First Free Browser

The maker of the world's No. 3 Internet browser offered its first free
version on Wednesday in a bid to close the gap with Microsoft's
market-leading Internet Explorer and AOL/Netscape.

Opera Software's market share is microscopic, at less than 1 percent.

The Oslo-based company's launch of an advertising-sponsored version of
Opera 5.0 for Windows intends to heat up the competition, said company
co-founder and chief executive, Jon S. von Tetzchner.

''Opera's status as just an alternative browser for the most Internet-savvy
users is ending, and we place ourselves firmly in the middle of the ongoing
browser war," he said.

What set privately owned Opera apart was that its estimated 1.5 million users were willing to pay $39 for the program, while the competing products were available for free.

Opera plans to distribute millions of compact discs to be included in computer magazines, as well as offer the browser through software makers and on Web sites.

Opera was born as a project by the Norwegian state telephone company Telenor, which had Tetzchner and his partner Geir Ivarsoey develop a browser from scratch. The company lost interest and gave the two the rights when they founded Opera Software in 1995.

Word of the browser spread on the Internet, and heavy Web users were drawn by Opera's speed and simplicity. It had no advertising to slow it down, could run several windows within one browser frame, zoom Web pages and be run from a keyboard, without needing a mouse.

The free version offered for download Wednesday does contain advertising, a break with Opera's tradition that the company insists will not reduce speed.

''The banner sized ad is quiet small, and they are only downloaded into the browser once a week and cached for later use," said head of technology Haakon Lie.

Opera said it has set strict limits on advertising and will include nothing that is too distracting, like sound or potentially offensive material. It also said users of the free version can, at any time, revert to the paid version - which will continue without advertising.

Opera executives say company income has recently been boosted by the sale of licenses to wireless makers - and the free browser move intends to further boost revenues.

Because Opera is 92 percent staff-owned - most still held by its founders - it does not publish financial results.

ISPs Find Free Internet Costs Them

Online search portal AltaVista on Sunday will cut off some 3 million users from its free Internet access service, the latest sign that freebies over the Web do not always pay.

The announcement comes after a host of smaller free Internet service providers shut down earlier this year and as Kmart-owned BlueLight.com said Monday it will be reevaluating its current, unlimited free service after the holidays.

''We're seeing a very necessary shakeout among the free ISPs," said Dylan Brooks, an analyst at Jupiter Research. ''The ad-supported ISP business grew far too quickly for what was healthy."

The demise of AltaVista's Web access giveaway is linked to the downfall of 1stUp.com, an Internet service provider that funneled 3 million out of its 5.5 million paying and non-paying clients through AltaVista. 1stUp, which like AltaVista is a unit of CMGI Inc, is closing down by Jan. 31.

Only NetZero, Juno and BlueLight.com remain as the major free Internet service providers, with BlueLight's giveaway potentially coming to an end.

AltaVista worked out a deal with Microsoft Corp. to offer AltaVista's 3 million non-paying users three free months of access on MSN. After that, they would pay $21.95 a month - among the priciest for dial-up service.

Jim Shissler, an AltaVista spokesman, said the company could not find another company to pick up the free service. AltaVista, whose online search engine will continue to operate, stopped taking new subscribers Monday and sent out notices to existing customers Monday and Tuesday.

AltaVista considers nearly 1 million of its users active - they logged on at least once in the past month. Many others register for free access as a backup to a paid service or otherwise rarely use the free service.

Meanwhile, Kmart-backed BlueLight.com took over assets of its failed provider, Spinway Inc., on Monday in order to retain more than 5 million registered users through the peak shopping season.

BlueLight spokesman Dave Karraker said the company will decide the fate of the service in January.

Although BlueLight may drop its current plan, which offers free access with unlimited use, Karraker said Wednesday that ''we will always have some form of free (access)." But he said BlueLight may charge a fee for unlimited use.

Typically, users of free services agree to keep open an advertisement window, and the services get almost all of their revenue by selling ads. As more dot-coms failed, Karraker said, there were fewer advertising opportunities.

BlueLight is restructuring its access service, he said, to become a gateway to Kmart and BlueLight shopping products. So instead of depending on ad revenue, the service wants to make money from additional sales of books, toys and jewelry.

That doesn't mean the era of free access is over.

Rather, providers of such services may have to look beyond selling ads - for instance, by bundling free service with a new computer or offering it as a gift for opening a brokerage account. Some telecommunications companies, including AT&T, offer Internet access $4.95 a month as part of a package of services.

In fact, Brooks of Jupiter Research said, 13 percent of users in 2003 will primarily use some form of free access, compared with about 8 percent now.

Mark Goldston, chairman and chief executive of NetZero, said the fact that other free providers failed does not mean free access is a bad business.

Though NetZero, which has some 6 million registered users, has yet to make a profit, Goldston insisted, ''This is a very good category to be in."

eBay Not in Talks to Buy uBid

Internet auction site eBay Inc. is not involved in talks to buy uBid Inc., a unit of CMGI Inc. that specializes in business-to-consumer online auctions, a source close to eBay said on Sunday.

Barron's reported in its Dec. 4 edition that the online auction giant was interested in buying the business-to consumer auction company.

The eBay source told Reuters that eBay has ''not been in any discussion to buy uBid," nor were they looking at uBid ''in any shape or form." An eBay spokesman declined to comment on the report.

According to Barron's, uBid Chief Executive Greg Jones recently met with representatives of San Jose, Calif.-based eBay and with Benchmark Capital, an early backer of eBay that remains a significant stockholder.

UBid's current 1.5 registered users would complement eBay's consumer-to-consumer business, whose core business is reaching a plateau, Barron's said.

UBid plans to launch a consumer-to-consumer auctions site next week to compete with eBay, the newspaper said. The new endeavor, Auction Exchange, will differ from eBay in that consumers will be required to secure their purchases by using a credit card.

Representatives from CMGI and Benchmark could not be reached immediately for comment on Sunday.

Chicago-based uBid runs an online auction site for refurbished and closeout merchandise, mostly computers and consumer electronic goods. The auction format gives vendors an outlet to dispose of inventory.

MP3.com Restores Listening Service

MP3.com restored its beleaguered music locker service Tuesday, seven months after lawsuits from record labels and music publishers forced its shutdown.

The MyMP3.com service, which was once free, will now feature two levels of service. For no charge, members can store up to 25 CDs. That service will be advertising-supported.

For an annual fee of $49.95, members will be able to store up to 500 CDs and enjoy more features and less advertising.

MyMP3.com, which allows members to store songs on the Internet and listen to them over any Web-enabled device, triggered a copyright infringement lawsuit in January by the five major record labels, music publishers and several independent labels.

The plaintiffs argued that by allowing people to instantly listen to music stored in the popular MP3 digital format on MP3.com's servers - even if users had bought the CD from MP3.com or proved they owned it by briefly inserting the disc into a computer for verification - MP3.com illegally distributed music for which they did not own the rights.

MP3.com, based in San Diego, disabled the service in May to prevent anyone from storing music produced by the major recording companies that filed the

copyright lawsuit.

Over the course of the summer, the company reached settlements with most labels, agreeing to pay a lump sum for past violations and a licensing fee for future use. Every major label settled, except for Universal Music Group, which forced the case to trial.

In September, U.S. District Judge Jed S. Rakoff ruled that MP3.com willfully violated record company copyrights and ordered the company to pay damages.

Last month, MP3.com ended the lawsuit by agreeing to pay UMG $53.4 million. The company also reached a separate licensing agreement with rock star David Bowie.

The company still faces lawsuits from several independent labels.

Several critical issues still remain for the company, including its efforts to negotiate licenses with independent labels that represent major artists such as The Backstreet Boys and 'N Sync.

And it remains to be seen if consumers will embrace the new service and will pay a subscription fee to listen to music they already own.

''Nobody yet knows how popular the premium service may prove to be," Phil Leigh, an analyst at Raymond James & Associates wrote in a report Tuesday. ''To date there has been little evidence that consumers are willing to pay for content on the Web, as evidenced by the experiences of organizations like Slate and TheStreet.Com."

U.S. Embraces European Computer Crime Proposal

The United States has endorsed the gist of a controversial European drive to tighten cybercrime laws over the protests of privacy, civil liberties and human rights advocates.

The central provisions of the 41-nation Council of Europe's latest draft convention ''are consistent with the existing framework of U.S. law and procedure," the Justice Department said in a Friday posting on its cybercrime Web site.

At issue is the first multilateral pact drafted specifically to deal with the cross-border nature of much computer-related crime.

When ready, it would be opened for signature worldwide in an effort to slash the procedural and jurisdictional obstacles that law enforcers say play into the hands of criminals operating through the Internet.

Targeted are such things as malicious code to disable Web sites as well as computer use for such garden-variety crimes like fraud, copyright infringement and distribution of child pornography.

The United States will decide whether to join only after the drafting is wrapped up, probably later this month, and the treaty is opened for signature, perhaps by the end of next year, the Justice Department said.

But in a ''Frequently Asked Questions" text, it played down charges that

the pact would stretch the long arm of the police improperly in cyberspace, trample on individual privacy and erode government accountability.

One key issue had to do with data-retention requirements for Internet Service Providers, companies that serve as electronic gateways to the Web.

In an October 18 statement signed by groups around the world, critics said logs based on such archived data had been used to track dissidents and persecute minorities.

''We urge you not to establish this requirement in a modern communications network," said a 27-group coalition including the American Civil Liberties Union, Privacy International and the Internet Society.

''Police agencies and powerful private interests acting outside of the democratic means of accountability have sought to use a closed process to establish rules that will have the effect of binding legislation," the groups added.

In its response to these concerns, the Justice Department said there was no such retention requirement at issue but a data ''preservation" provision.

''Preservation is not a new idea; it has been the law in the United States for nearly five years," the statement said.

Similarly, it discounted critics' fears that the convention would mandate surveillance capabilities be built into service providers' architecture.

But ''there is no prohibition on states imposing such requirements if necessary under their legal systems," the posting said.

The latest draft by a panel of the Council of Europe, the 24th in a marathon that began in the late 1980s with U.S. support, was released on Nov. 19. The United States has had a "real voice" in the drafting process, represented by the Departments of State and Justice in close consultation with other U.S. agencies, the FAQ said.

David Sobel, general counsel of the Washington-based Electronic Privacy Information Center, said the Justice Department was in effect acknowledging that the treaty could be read ''to require some things that are very controversial," including redesign of system architecture to facilitate surveillance.

Washington currently exempts Internet service providers from the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The law, crafted largely at the behest of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, requires other U.S. telecommunications providers and equipment manufacturers to build in a window for court-ordered wiretaps.

Barry Steinhardt, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said the pact could force police in the United States to conduct searches under rules established by treaty "that don't respect the limits of police powers imposed by the U.S. Constitution."

British Police Want to Spy on Phone Calls, E-Mail

Britain's police and intelligence services are seeking the right to access

records of every telephone call, e-mail and internet connection made in the UK, the government said Sunday.

The country's crime-fighting and intelligence agencies want all such communications to be logged, and the information stored for seven years in vast government-run ''data warehouses."

''They have passed a document to us which we are now looking at, but it has to be stressed that there has been no decision made on this," a Home Office spokeswoman told Reuters.

''We work very closely with these organizations and want to ensure they have the tools they need to tackle serious, organized crime, but there are other important issues, such as human rights, to be considered."

The spokeswoman said the powers sought would require new legislation, but ''that is a long way off at the moment."

The request, from the police, customs and intelligence services, was first reported Sunday by The Observer newspaper, which had seen a copy of the document submitted to the Home Office.

The document said new powers were needed to tackle growing problems of cyber crime, pedophiles' use of computers to run child porn rings, terrorism and international drug trafficking, according to The Observer report.

Politicians and campaigners cited by the paper as condemning the idea included Conservative peer and privacy expert Lord Cope.

''We are sympathetic to the need for greater powers to fight modern types of crime," he said.

''But vast banks of information on every member of the public can quickly slip into the world of Big Brother. I will be asking serious questions about this."

The document, written by Roger Gaspar, deputy director-general of the National Criminal Intelligence Service, says the new demands are ''vital in the interests of justice."

Computer Data Key to Racketeer Case

In a case that could test the limits of FBI surveillance in the Information Age, an alleged racketeer is going to trial on evidence gathered by agents who rigged his computer and monitored his every keystroke.

Nicodemo S. Scarfo Jr., 35, the son of the jailed former boss of the Philadelphia mob, faces federal charges of running a bookmaking and loansharking operation.

According to court documents, agents modified a computer Scarfo used at his Essex County business so that the FBI could monitor every keystroke, according to court documents.

Scarfo could become the first defendant to challenge covert computer surveillance by the FBI.

Electronic surveillance by government agencies is under scrutiny by civil
liberties groups, which maintain such techniques violate privacy and invite
abuse.

No court has yet considered a challenge to evidence from keystroke capture,
said David L. Sobel, general counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information
Center, a Washington-based nonprofit group.

''If this kind of technique were to become commonplace, we're talking about
a dramatic increase in the number of police break-ins into private
residences," Sobel said Tuesday.

''It really points out how potentially invasive the FBI's high-tech
surveillance techniques can be, and it really pushes the envelope on
current wiretap law."

The Justice Department and FBI had no immediate comment on whether the
keystroke capture technique has been used in other cases.

Its use in the Scarfo case was revealed Monday by The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Former Scarfo lawyer Donald F. Manno said, ''Anything he typed on that
keyboard - a letter to his lawyer, personal or medical records, legitimate
business records - they got it all."

Scarfo faces trial sometime next year on charges he operated an illegal
gambling business from 1996 to 1999 in New Jersey that took in more than
$2,000 a day and tried to collect loans through extortion.

Ronald D. Wigler, the federal prosecutor in the case, did not return a call
for comment Tuesday.

FBI Chimes In On Shockwave Email Virus

The FBI has joined a growing number of experts that are warning computer
users about a new email virus that last week struck several U.S. companies
and comes disguised as an Internet movie.

Although it carries no destructive payload, the virus, which is an
Internet worm, routinely sends itself to a victim's email address book,
making it possible to clog email networks with its mass mailing
capability, the FBI's Washington, D.C.-based National Infrastructure
Protection Center warned.

Experts warn that if the new virus gains enough momentum, it could crash
email servers in the same way the notorious " I Love You" virus did.

The government has been watching the virus for some time and has given it
a threat assessment of "medium." The worm comes as a Shockwave Internet
animation format with the header, "A great Shockwave flash movie,"
referring to the popular animation format.

When activated, the virus copies itself on the C drive and start-up
directory and shoots itself as an attachment to all the contacts in the
victim's Microsoft Outlook address book.

Over the past week, several antivirus companies have also posted warnings about the worm, assigning threat assessments ranging from "low" to "high" risk.

Free Software Downloads Have Strings Attached

Little on the Internet is truly free. That's the message from privacy advocates who are red-flagging some popular and free downloadable software that may come with hidden costs.

In a report by the University of Denver in conjunction with the Privacy Foundation, researchers found that consumers unknowingly give up personal and often sensitive information in exchange for certain products.

The data is then used to direct advertisements that speak to a person's tastes.

"I think consumers are confused when they find out what they have to give up" for some products, said David Martin, a professor at the University of Denver who spearheaded the report. "They learn that it may be free of charge, but it's not a free gift."

For his report, Martin looked at 16 browser extensions designed to making surfing easier. Since the study began, however, three have gone out of Business, and a few others have drastically changed their business models so the findings no longer apply.

Some of the products studied still exist, and the practice of software providers culling personal data without spelling it out to consumers has raised a few eyebrows in privacy circles.

All of the products examined for the report failed to provide clear notice to the consumers. Most transmitted more personal information than necessary. A few either didn't give people choices about which details would be collected, or they stored the data in insecure systems, the report said.

The greatest concern, however, was the practice of monitoring search queries, which can be sensitive and personal. For example, if a person using some of the free software looked up information about AIDS, that query could then be stored as part of a consumer profile.

Zack Network, a San Mateo, Calif.-based company, appeared to be the most egregious offender, according to the report. Martin and the other researchers concluded that Zack collected more personal information than necessary, didn't tell customers the extent of the company's data gathering, offered no opt-out choices, and lacked security.

Representatives at Zack disputed those claims and charged that the findings are outdated. They say the company has since changed its business model, which now focuses on working with other businesses than with consumers.

"We don't log data, and we don't pay attention to the information," said Kristie Lolje, public relations manager at Zack. "Never do we coordinate Web surfing habits to a person's name."

Ray Everett-Church, chief privacy officer at Hayward, Calif.-based AllAdvantage, said some of the information in the report was useful--such as breaking down privacy policies into subgroups such as choice, notice, security and access.

But he said criticisms of privacy policies being too long or too difficult to understand were "contradictory and confusing."

AllAdvantage was knocked in the report for not giving consumers notice.

Other companies and products mentioned included SurfMonkey, NeoPlanet, CueCat and Flyswat.

Martin said he believes many companies didn't intend to collect sensitive data, but rather it became an unintended consequence when developing products.

An easy way to remedy the problem after the fact, he said, is to rewrite privacy policies that explain exactly what kind of information is being gathered from a consumer and how it will be used.

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